AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for screening a patient for the presence of colorectal cancer, comprising the steps of:

measuring a quantitative amount of genome equivalents of patient genomic DNA in a stool sample comprising shed cells or cellular debris, wherein the quantitative amount of genome equivalents is measured by measuring an amount of fragments of less than 200 bp; and

identifying the patient as a candidate for additional cancer testing if the amount of genome equivalents is above a predetermined threshold amount of genome equivalents.

2.-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of performing an assay on a stool sample from the patient if the patient is identified as a candidate for additional cancer testing.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the assay is selected from the group consisting of a DNA integrity assay, mutation detection, enumerated LOH, expression assays, and FISH.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the assay detects mutations at a genetic locus selected from the group consisting of p53, ras, APC, DCC, and BAT-26.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of performing a diagnostic examination on the patient if the patient is identified as a candidate for additional cancer testing.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the step of performing a diagnostic examination is selected from the group consisting of a colonoscopy, a sigmoidoscopy, a fecal ocult blood testing and an upper gastrointestinal evaluation.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the patient sample is selected from the group consisting of sputum, pancreatic fluid, bile, lymph, blood, urine, cerebrospinal fluid, seminal fluid, saliva, breast nipple aspirate, and pus.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the cancer is colorectal cancer or pre-cancer.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 11, wherein the cancer is selected from the group consisting of lung cancer, esophageal cancer, prostrate cancer, stomach cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer and lymphoma.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for screening a patient for the presence of abnormal proliferating colorectal cancer cells comprising the steps of:

measuring a quantitative amount of genome equivalents of patient genomic DNA in a stool sample comprising shed cells or cellular debris, wherein the quantitative amount of genome equivalents is measured by measuring an amount of fragments of less than 200 bp; and

identifying a positive screen as a sample in which the amount of genome equivalents is above a predetermined threshold amount of genome equivalents.

15.-16. (Cancelled)

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of performing an assay on a stool sample from the patient if a positive screen is identified in the identifying step.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the assay is selected from the group consisting of a DNA integrity assay, mutation detection, enumerated LOH, expression assays, and FISH.

19. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the assay detects mutations at a genetic locus selected from the group consisting of p53, ras, APC, DCC, and BAT-26.

20. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of performing a diagnostic examination on the patient if a positive screen is identified in the identifying step.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the step of performing a diagnostic examination is selected from the group consisting of a colonoscopy, a sigmoidoscopy, a fecal occult blood testing and an upper gastrointestinal evaluation.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 14, wherein the patient sample is selected from the group consisting of sputum, pancreatic fluid, bile, lymph, blood, urine, cerebrospinal fluid, seminal fluid, saliva, breast nipple aspirate, and pus.

24. (Currently Amended) A method for diagnosing ~~the health of~~ cancer in a patient, comprising the steps of:

measuring a quantitative amount of genome equivalents of patient genomic DNA in a stool sample comprising shed cells or cellular debris, wherein the quantitative amount of genome equivalents is measured by measuring an amount of fragments of less than 200 bp; and

~~performing an assay on a sample from the patient~~ if the amount of genome equivalents is above a predetermined threshold amount of genome equivalents, performing an additional assay ~~wherein the state of health of the patient is evaluated~~ to determine if the patient has ~~colorectal~~ cancer.

25.-26. (Cancelled)

27. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the assay is selected from the group consisting of a DNA integrity assay, mutation detection, enumerated LOH, expression assays, and FISH.

28. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the assay detects mutations at a genetic locus selected from the group consisting of p53, ras, APC, DCC, and BAT-26.

29. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the method further comprises performing a diagnostic examination of the patient.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein the diagnostic examination is selected from the group consisting of a colonoscopy, a sigmoidoscopy, a fecal occult blood testing and an upper gastrointestinal evaluation.

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 24, wherein the patient sample is selected from the group consisting of sputum, pancreatic fluid, bile, lymph, blood, urine, cerebrospinal fluid, seminal fluid, saliva, breast nipple aspirate, and pus.

33. (New) The method of claim 24, wherein the cancer is colorectal cancer or pre-cancer.

34. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein the cancer is selected from the group consisting of lung cancer, esophageal cancer, prostrate cancer, stomach cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer and lymphoma.